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ABSTRACT

This report examines the status of social studies in the Deleware elementary school grades. The objective is not only to inform policymakers in the state of Delaware, but also to correlate with other states' educational systems. Information was assembled by a statewide survey of district-level social studies supervisors; a statewide survey of elementary-school building administrators or team leaders or curriculum specialist; and interviews with 20 classroom teachers. Areas of social studies focused on were curriculum, instructional practices, instructional materials, and evaluation procedures. The study concluded that: policymakers need to address directly the issue of status. Social studies is regarded by practitioners as "enrichment" or second-rank subjects; there is a confusing array of beliefs concerning the aims and content of elementary social studies in Delaware, financial and scholarly support must be provided if serious social studies reform is to occur; more attention to multiculturalism seems warranted; and current restructuring efforts underscore that policymakers need to examine how social studies should be integrated with other areas of the curriculum such as language arts and science. Sample questionnaires used in surveys conclude the paper. Contains 21 references. (JAG)

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THE STATUS OF THE ELEMENTARY SOCIAL STUDIES IN DELAWARE: VIEWS FROM THE FIELD*

Stephen J. Thornton

Neil O. Houser

INTRODUCTION

Since at least the mid-1970s, there have been periodic, alarming reports that the social studies is in trouble in the nation's elementary schools: it is allocated less instructional time than was once the case and is frequently given little more than perfunctory consideration in curriculum reform proposals (Finkelstein, Nielsen, & Switzer, 1993; Goodlad, 1984; Gross, 1977; Hahn, 1985; Lengel & Superka, 1982; National Council for the Social Studies, Taskforce on Early Childhood/Elementary Social Studies, 1989; Shaver, 1989; Thornton & Wenger, 1990; Wood, et al., 1989). The decline has been most severe in the

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*This report is based on information collected over a two-year period from the late fall of 1990 to the late fall of 1992. The study was conducted by the authors of this report under the auspices of the Center for Educational Leadership and Evaluation, College of Education, University of Delaware. We gratefully acknowledge the cooperation of Mr. Lewis Huffman, State Supervisor of Social Studies, the assistance of the classroom teachers who granted personal interviews in the midst of the always busy school year, the help of school and district representatives who were gracious enough to respond to our questionnaires, and dozens of other individuals throughout Delaware. Although these individuals cannot be named herein because of the need to disguise the identities of particular individuals and particular districts, it is their responses which made this report possible.

primary grades (K-3), although its status in the upper elementary grades (4-6) also appears less certain than a generation ago. The emphasis placed since the 1970s upon the so-called "basics"--reading and mathematics--seems to have undermined the larger role once played by social studies in elementary programs.

The apparent decline in status of elementary social studies, however, has prompted relatively few attempts to diagnose needs at the state level. This failure to address needs should concern policymakers, educational practitioners, parents, and citizens for at least three reasons. First, the educational focus of elementary school programs appears to have grown increasingly narrow over the last 20 years--they are dominated by narrow conceptions of cognition (Eisner, 1982) and there has been a devaluing of their role in educating concerned, responsible, and caring children (Noddings, 1992). Second, as the National Council for the Social Studies Task Force on Early Childhood/Elementary Social Studies (1989) warned:

> Unless children acquire the foundations of knowledge, attitudes, and skills in social studies in the important elementary years, it is unlikely that teachers in the junior and senior high schools will be successful in preparing effective citizens for the 21st century. (p. 14)

Third, the relative scarcity of information about the state of social studies in elementary schools means that policymakers and practitioners may be making decisions based on inaccurate knowledge and assumptions.

STUDY DESIGN

Our aim in this report is to inform policymaking in the State of Delaware; however, much of the information and recommendations may be relevant to other states and the nation. Although Delaware is one of the smallest states in both population and area, its public schools share important commonalities with public schools in many other states: for example, Delaware's public schools serve an increasingly large poor and culturally diverse population as well as spanning the range from inner city to suburban to rural settings. Moreover, as in many other states, there is considerable activity directed towards restructuring schools and towards curriculum reform. Educators and policymakers in other states will, of course, have to judge for themselves the applicability of our findings to their own settings.

The information included in this report was assembled by three means: (1) a statewide survey of district-level social studies supervisors (or their equivalent, since many districts do not have supervisors with exclusive responsibility for social studies); (2) a statewide survey of elementary-school building administrators or team leaders or curriculum specialists; and, (3) interviews with 20 classroom teachers. Through the combination of district and school questionnaires, we surveyed local and central office administrators responsible for social studies instruction from diverse areas of the state and various grade levels between pre-kindergarten and grade six. The surveys

contained Likert scales, items to be rank-ordered, and questions and statements calling for brief written responses (see Appendix A). By surveying two different groups, we aimed to secure a fuller picture of statewide trends and local variations than would be possible from surveying either group alone.

We also considered it important to go beyond survey questionnaires in order to better explain classroom practices. Although surveys are an effective means of describing broad patterns, they reveal little about the reasons underlying those patterns. Therefore, we interviewed 20 teachers representative of diverse settings and grade levels across the state. These semi-structured interviews provided an invaluable opportunity to gain a sense of the practitioner's perspective, primarily regarding the key themes that emerged from the surveys. (Ideally, we would have liked to have gone further and supplemented the interviews with classroom observations, but limited resources prevented this.)

The district-level survey was mailed to the 16 Delaware school districts that contain elementary-level social studies programs. Twelve of the 16 districts responded to our surveys, yielding an overall return rate of 75%. Next, the school-level survey was disseminated to all 112 schools in Delaware serving any or all combinations of grades between K and 6. Responses from 75% of the schools (N=84) representing 27 different grade-level combinations (e.g., K-2, pre-K-3, K plus 4-6, 1-6, 6-8) were eventually returned.

FINDINGS

Although the surveys and teacher interviews yielded an abundance of data which could have been analyzed in numerous ways, we focused on four major areas that seemed most relevant to diagnosing current needs in elementary social studies: (1) The curriculum, (2) Instructional practices, (3) Instructional materials, and (4) Evaluation procedures.

The Nature of the Social Studies Curriculum

In our assessment of the social studies curriculum, we considered the (1) scope of the curriculum, (2) the sequence of the curriculum, (3) the status of the social studies in relation to other areas of the elementary curriculum, and (4) the degree of consonance between guidelines established by centralized (e.g., state and district) agencies and actual classroom practice. We will address each of these areas in turn.

The Scope of the Curriculum

While it is clear that the social studies curriculum within the state varies considerably by teacher and by school, four broad areas typically associated with social education were reported consistently in the surveys and interviews: (1) history, (2) geography, (3) the promotion of cultural awareness, and, (4) the socialization of the child.

Various combinations of these four areas were reflected throughout both the survey data and the interviews although

individuals sometimes did not define their terms in the same ways. When asked how she would define the social studies, for example, a sixth grade teacher responded, "It's actually a combination of things, as far as I can see. History, geography, current affairs, how people relate to their world, their environment. I guess that's about it." More generally, "history" and "geography" were identified in virtually every interview and on numerous district and school surveys. Sometimes history and geography, or certain aspects of these areas of study, were discussed in a decontextualized fashion (e.g., "map skills," "famous people," "important events"), but just as frequently history and geography were discussed in broader, more meaningful social and cultural contexts. For example, when asked whether there was any value or need for the social studies, one fourth-grade teacher replied:

> I think there is. To give students an understanding of where they are in the world, and where everything else is in relation to them. And also just how there are different...cultures and people live differently. I mean, our students know what it's like to live in a working-class or an upper-middle class type environment where people are all the same, but it's to teach kids that there's also many different cultures, many different ways of living around the world.

Thus, although history and geography were sometimes conceived as a collection of facts and discrete skills, there was also evidence that these social studies subjects were conceived as sense-making lenses on the world, past and present.

The promotion of cultural awareness appeared to be a growing priority. Like history and geography, sometimes "culture" was defined narrowly--as little more than customs, habits or holidays (e.g., sampling the foods of a particular ethnic, racial or cultural group, commemorating Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday). This conception of cultural awareness, according to prominent multicultural educators (e.g., Banks, 1988) can be miseducative--possibly even leading to the reinforcement of stereotypes. Some educators appeared, however, to adopt a broader view of cultural awareness. As one school representative wrote, "We...are in touch with people throughout the world on a daily basis. Multicultural education from a social studies perspective is crucial in preparing our young people for their world of today and tomorrow." Without classroom observations, we were unable to confirm the extent to which actual classroom practices incorporated substantively different conceptions of "cultural awareness." Nonetheless, the data indicate that a number of district and school representatives and classroom practitioners are aware of the need to move beyond what Banks (1989) has called the mere "contributions" level of multicultural education and towards the level of substantial curriculum "transformation."

"Socialization" was a common focus as well, particularly among practitioners in the primary grades. As one first-grade teacher said, the value of the social studies is "mostly for social development. When I think of social studies, I think of getting along with others, [of] learning how to be cooperative..." Both this teacher and many other respondents believed that "socialization" served not only the broad purpose of orienting students to life in the general society, but also the more immediate purpose of making the teacher's job more manageable. (Similar findings have, of course, often been reported in nationally-representative studies [e.g., Shaver, Davis, & Helburn, 1980]). Since this kind of socialization is frequently associated with the uncritical acceptance of information and inculcation of prevailing societal norms, it may be at odds with other goals such as multicultural education.

In sum, history, geography, cultural awareness and socialization were reported as the mainstays of the curriculum. Although each of these areas of study was common to both the primary and upper elementary grades, socialization appeared the predominant concern in grades K-3, while in grades 4-6 there was a heavier academic emphasis on geography and history as well as an increased concentration on cultural awareness, and perhaps a slight decrease in attention to socialization.

Curriculum Sequence

According to both the survey and interview data, social studies instructional programs generally progress through a traditional near to far scope and sequence, the so-called expanding environments sequence. For example, teachers in the primary grades tended to focus on "community helpers," on family and classroom relationships, and the like. Teachers in grades 4-6, on the other hand, moved from the study of the state or region, to the nation, and typically ended in study of the world.

These findings are similar to the curriculum sequence in many other states (Jenness, 1990; Thornton, 1992a) and are, thus, not particularly surprising. The dominance of the expanding environments sequence is further explained by the fact that it is organizational schema of most major textbook series. Even though teachers--especially in the early elementary grades--appear less reliant upon the textbook than a generation ago, many teachers continue to look to the textbook as the primary source of curriculum (Thornton, 1992b).

Expanding environments also appears to fit comfortably with teachers' views on socialization of their students. It is commonly believed that young children who leave the relatively smaller and less formally structured home environment to interact in larger, more socially diverse and more formally structured classroom and school settings naturally require assistance if the transition is to be a smooth one. "Successful" socialization is therefore perceived as an integral part of the teacher's task

(Jackson, 1968) as the child shifts from a family orientation toward broader community participation.

The Status of the Social Studies

The attention that social studies or any other subject receives is in large measure determined by its perceived educational importance vis-a-vis other subjects. Figure 1 indicates district and school representatives' perceptions regarding the beliefs of primary-grades teachers concerning the status of nine common subjects.

	District Representatives	School Representatives
1	reading	reading
2	mathematics	mathematics
3	language arts	language arts
4	science	science
5	social studies	social studies
6	art	physical education
7	music	art
8	physical education	music
9	foreign languages	foreign languages

Figure 1. Reported Status of Subjects in grades K-3

As Figure 1 shows, there is widespread agreement about the status of at least the five major subjects in the elementary curriculum. It is also abundantly clear that reading, math, and language arts are perceived as the heart of the K-3 curriculum. According to the surveys, science and social studies have an almost identical status, albeit markedly lower than reading, math, and language arts. The former are regarded, in Susan Stodolsky's (1988) apt words, as "enrichment," while the latter

are considered "basic." Nonetheless, while social studies and science may hold an "enrichment" rather than a "basic" status, they are generally perceived as more important than art, music, and physical education. Finally, on a cautionary note, given that there was repeated reference in both surveys and interviews to "whole language," "integrated" curricula, and the like, subject barriers may be considerably more permeable than would be concluded by simply taking the status rankings at face value. This matter will be discussed more fully below.

Virtually no one seemed to consider foreign languages an important area of study in the primary grades. This may have implications for more global- and less U.S.-centered social studies programs. As several policy and educational groups (e.g., Committee on Trade and Foreign Relations of the National Governors' Association, 1987) have argued, a more internationally-oriented curriculum requires attention to both social studies and world languages. Our hunch is that the low status accorded languages other than English in Delaware may be partly explained by the relatively small proportion of Delaware schoolchildren hailing from limited English-speaking backgrounds compared to many other states such as California, New York, Florida, and Texas. Consequently, educational policymakers and practitioners in Delaware may perceive language issues as less pressing than their counterparts in some other states. Thus, Delaware may not be representative of national trends in this regard.

Overall, the status of subjects in the upper elementary grades follows the same pattern as the primary grades. Again, respondents ranked reading, math, and language arts in a first tier, with social studies and science in a second tier (see Figure 2).

	District Representatives	School Representatives
1	reading	reading
2	mathematics	mathematics
3	language arts	language arts
4	science	science
5	social studies	social studies
6	art	physical education
7	physical education	art
8	music	music
9	foreign languages	foreign languages

Figure 2. Reported Status of Subjects in Grades 4-6

Finally, as others have reported (e.g., Lengel & Superka, 1982), the amount of time allocated to social studies generally increases with the grade level (see Figure 3). While Delaware children in grades one and two receive on average 118 minutes per week of social studies, this increases to an average of 160 minutes by grade six.

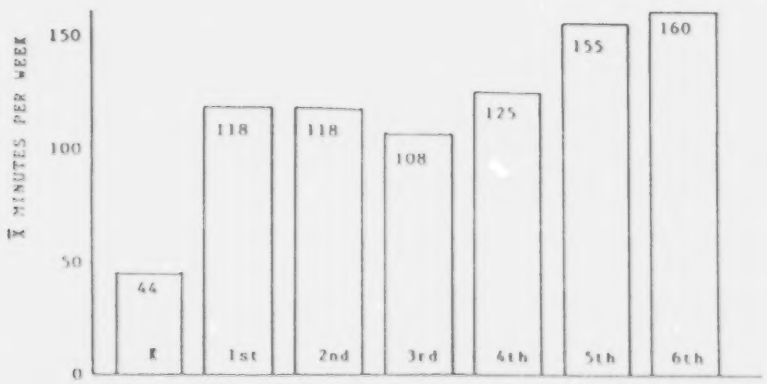

Figure 3. Average Minutes of Social Studies Per Week (Recommended by District)

These figures are much the same as those reported by Iris Weiss in a 1978 national survey of elementary-school teachers (p. 51). Moreover, as James P. Shaver (1989) observed in his useful summary of "what is known about elementary social studies," there is wide variety in what individual teachers do. Shaver (1989) also observed that more "social studies" is taught than surveys indicate. He speculated that this under- representation resulted from the failure of some researchers to account adequately for social studies content that was "accidentally" or deliberately taught during other lessons: for example, when students read a story about pioneers on the Oregon Trail, is this "reading" or "social studies" or both?

Shaver's conclusion that more social studies is taught than surveys indicate was supported by the comments of a number of the teachers we interviewed. For instance, one first-grade teacher said, "I don't think of it [social studies] in the first grade curriculum too much." But then she added, "Geography, yes, if I can pull down the globe and talk about where a story is taking place." Besides being integrated into the other parts of the curriculum, aspects of the social studies are also taught (again, either implicitly or deliberately) during less formal periods of the school day. The same first-grade teacher who used the globe during reading described one of her indirect approaches to teaching about interpersonal relationships:

> I might...take advantage of an opportunity where a fight's on the playground and so we're gonna talk about

> it in the afternoon... [Or] someone has a new baby sister being born, and so we discuss jealousy.

Similarly, another first grade teacher, an 18-year veteran whose self-described, "highly integrated" approach intertwines the social studies with many areas of the curriculum, observed:

> For instance, in February when we do Black History month I incorporate all the other areas of the curriculum....[W]e'll get into science, even through spiders, through the African folk tales of Anansi. And, we'll do scientific observations of an aquarium with spiders in it....And on math we'll write math stories about spiders and 'double facts' because spiders have four plus four legs, eight legs....I believe you try to incorporate everything as much as possible.

In such cases, it certainly appears as if more social studies is being taught than survey responses might reveal.

In sum, the status of social studies in Delaware public elementary schools varies from setting to setting. It is difficult to provide robust generalizations. On the one hand, most school administrators, district personnel, and teachers claim that social studies should have an important place in the elementary curriculum--and it is plain that many teachers afford it that place. On the other hand, the social studies still

appear firmly relegated to an "enrichment" status in the curriculum of many, perhaps most, elementary schools. When asked to define the social studies, for example, a second grade teacher expressed a commonly held perspective:

> It seems like social studies is one of the things you put on the backburner--everything else has to be brought first....It's what we do when we have time left over...science is more interesting....Kids look forward to it.

These views were echoed in the upper elementary grades as well. For instance, a fourth-grade team leader said that:

> Social studies is...one of those things that's kind of tacked on to the end....You know, if you need to do extra math, the first thing you cut is social studies and science. It's that whole thing, it's that whole issue of time again.

Although the reasons for the "backburner" status are undoubtedly varied and complex, some factors appear more influential than others. The most consistent explanations include a dearth of available instructional time (e.g., "It's what we do when we have time left over," "...the first thing you cut is social studies and science") and a lack of interest in the social studies, at least as many teachers have traditionally defined social studies (e.g., "...science is more interesting"). We also formed the

strong impression that there appeared to be considerable uncertainty about the content, aims and importance of social studies, particularly in the primary grades--an impression that is consistent with Goodlad's (1984) findings in a nationally-representative study.

Consistency Between State and District Guidelines and Classroom Practice: A Trend Toward Local Decision-making?

Both district- and school-level respondents were asked about district curriculum guidelines, the former in terms of grade-level articulation (i.e., the extent to which knowledge, skills, and values students learn in one grade connect to what they will learn in the next grade) and the latter in terms of adherence to the district's curriculum guide. Fully two-thirds of the district respondents claimed that there was good articulation in their districts. Furthermore, several of them argued that when teachers do diverge from the district scope and sequence, they often have good reason to do so. Indeed, only two district representatives claimed that there was poor grade-level articulation, and one of those remarked that teachers who diverged from the curriculum guide were not necessarily viewed negatively at the district level. There was, more generally, strong support voiced among many district and school representatives for the importance of respecting the teachers' perspectives on curriculum decision making. As one district representative remarked:

> Teachers do follow the teacher-developed sequence for social studies....However, it is not possible to monitor each teacher's complete adoption of the district curriculum and all of its recommendations. As a result, variations occur which depend on teacher interest, expertise, and circumstance.

Despite the apparent willingness of district personnel to accept teacher modifications in the curriculum, the school representatives held that teachers generally adhere to the district curriculum guide. Using a Likert scale, for example, the school survey contained a question about the extent to which teachers adhered to the district curriculum guide (with 1 = not at all, 3 = somewhat, and 5 = completely). The mean score across districts was 4.1.

Although the Likert scale suggests strong adherence to district guidelines, this conclusion should be regarded with a degree of caution. It is possible that teachers themselves played a major role in the development of district curriculum guides, in which case their adherence to it would be less remarkable. Moreover, it is not at all clear what criteria individuals and particular schools used to determine what constituted "following" the curriculum guide. However, the most important cause for caution was the fact that our survey results seemed to contradict what we heard in the teacher interviews.

While the interviews generally supported the view that teacher involvement in centralized curriculum development is on the rise, they flatly contradicted the conclusion that these (or any other) centrally developed social studies standards are closely adhered to in actual practice. Although there was some evidence that teachers aligned their practice closely with the district standards in reading/language arts and math (the high status subjects most heavily represented on standardized tests), it appears that social studies in the classroom was anything but closely aligned with the district curricula. It was plain that many teachers made scant effort to adhere to district guidelines. Indeed, in some cases teachers were not even aware of, much less compliant with, the district established curricular guidelines. For example, one first-grade teacher said, "I don't really know of a social studies curriculum that we have. I understand we had a committee at one time, but I think [it] no longer...exists."

We can only conclude that district personnel and school administrators are either ill-informed about social studies curriculum-in-use or that teachers are not fully aware of the degree to which their actions actually fall in line with the district standards. Whatever the reason, it is apparent that prevailing emphases on reading/language arts and math, coupled with limitations in available instructional time during the school day, often make it difficult for teachers to provide even minimal instruction in the social studies, much less adhere to a set of district guidelines. The teacher who earlier noted that

social studies and science are neglected when additional mathematics instruction is needed further observed:

> I'll tell you...this was something that was done in the third grade last year in our building....The administrators--all they were telling everybody was: "Our test scores need to be higher. Our test scores need to be higher." So...the third grade teachers in our building...stopped teaching social studies and science for a whole month--and taught extra math and English. And so the kids did not get any social studies or science for at least a month.

Moreover, aside from the social studies being relegated to secondary status in favor of more "basic" subjects, it is seldom clear what constitutes adherence to district guidelines since they are usually open to multiple reasonable interpretations. This was captured well in the remark of a veteran sixth-grade teacher:

> Social studies is such a broad topic. In sixth grade our topic is the world! Our social studies book covers everything from map and graph skills...through all the ancient civilizations and through modern Africa, Asia and Europe...of course there's no way that any one person [laughs] could cover that content....What you end up doing is, you end up doing what you enjoy most.

Our data suggest that teachers in Delaware are becoming increasingly involved in the development of district- and even state-level social studies curricula/standards. However, it is even more common for teachers to be involved in curricular decision-making at the school, grade, and individual classroom levels. As one sixth-grade teacher put it:

> I think a lot of curriculum choices are made once that door's shut....If somebody gives me a book, fine. But once I shut that door,...I'm gonna sort of do it my way--what I feel is important.

To sum up, curriculum decision-making in the social studies is gradually becoming less centralized, and a significant number of teachers are increasingly assertive about their curricular priorities. There is also evidence that school administrators and district personnel are supportive of allowing teachers more autonomy in curriculum decision-making. This seems consistent, at least at first glance, with efforts in Delaware and other states to transform schools into places where curriculum decisions are made more collegially.

Instructional Practices in the Social Studies

As we have already pointed out, there are often significant differences between how social studies is approached in the primary grades versus the upper-elementary grades. Therefore, we

have considered them separately in the realms of instructional practices, status, and evaluation procedures.

We deliberately kept the surveys brief based on the assumption that brevity would elicit the greatest possible number of responses. However, we paid a price for this brevity: for example, the terms used to describe instructional practices were not defined in the survey. Perhaps because such terms were not defined, there were large numbers of "not-applicable" answers in the surveys. As a result of the high number of "not-applicable" responses and the clustering of the majority of responses around the top five items, we included only the five most frequently cited instructional practices herein. We subsequently used the interviews to gain a greater sense of what practitioners understood by terms such as "discussion/recitation" which are open to a wide variety of interpretations. As Figure 4 shows, both district and school representatives identified the same five instructional strategies as the most commonly employed.

	District	School
1	Community/Experience-Based	Discussion/Recitation
2	Discussion/Recitation	Unit/Course Projects
3	Inquiry/Discovery	Inquiry/Discovery
4	Individual Assign./Seatwork	Individ. Assign./Seatwork
5	Unit/Course Projects	Community/Exper.-Based

Figure 4. Most Commonly Reported Instructional Practices in Grades K-3

On the whole, interviews with primary-grade teachers supported the survey findings, indicating that they prefer experience-based "hands-on" activities (including unit/course projects and class discussion) to the other instructional approaches identified on the questionnaires. More broadly, teachers identified two salient characteristics of primary-grades instruction in social studies: (1) integration with other subject matters, and (2) emphases on discussion and student experiences.

Curriculum Integration

As noted above, and consistent with Shaver's (1989) claim that more social studies is taught than is reported on surveys, we found that practitioners often teach aspects of the social studies without necessarily thinking of their efforts as involving social studies. Recall, for example, the teacher who said she did not often think of the social studies in relation to her first grade curriculum, but who then described personal approaches that involved integrating geography and reading and the examination of interpersonal relationships based on events taking place during recess. It appears that primary-grades teachers often downplay subject-matter boundaries. A kindergarten teacher seemed to speak for many practitioners throughout the state when she said: "I teach social studies, I would say, on an ongoing basis in an indirect way...I don't single out a separate part of my day or anything for social studies." Although there was some evidence that the boundary

between the social studies and other subjects became clearer by the upper elementary grades (e.g., textbooks were utilized more consistently in grades 4-6; lecture and independent seatwork were more frequently utilized), social studies instruction is still frequently integrated with other subjects in the upper-elementary grades as well.

"Hands-On" Social Studies

Primary-grade teachers emphasized their preference for "hands-on" (i.e., activity-oriented) learning experiences and for discussion during social studies instruction. These approaches were more successful in engaging children, as one first-grade teacher put it, "than feeding them information." For example, as several of the interviews indicated, teachers want to use more community resources--both human (e.g., guest speakers) and otherwise (e.g., local historical sites). However, many believe this is simply not an attainable goal given existing financial and time constraints.

	District	School
1	Discussion/Recitation	Discussion/Recitation
2	Lecture	Individ. Assign./Seatwork
3	Inquiry/Discovery	Unit/Course Projects
4	Individual Assign./Seatwork	Lecture
5	Community-/Experience-Based	Inquiry/Discovery

Figure 5. Most Commonly Reported Instructional Practices in Grades 4-6.

As Figure 5 shows, district and school representatives agree that discussion/recitation is the most commonly employed instructional strategy in the upper elementary grades. Most of the teachers in grades 4-6, (along with virtually all of the K-3 teachers), indicated that their own lessons included discussion and unit/course projects. Conversely, few described activities that might be considered inquiry/discovery based or that utilized lecture extensively. Time and again the upper-elementary teachers, like their primary-grades counterparts, stressed the need to use "hands-on" activities as a means of making learning "meaningful," or "fun." In both the primary and upper grades a premium was placed on avoiding "boring" lessons, on making them "interesting" since, as one teacher put it, "the kids work better--and they learn more. And...they like it more." Lecture and extensive use of the textbook were typically viewed as boring or meaningless for elementary-school students.

Social Studies Materials

Researchers have often reported the dominance of the textbook as an instructional material in elementary social studies (e.g., McCutcheon, 1981; Patrick & Hawke, 1982; Thornton & Wenger, 1990). According to our survey findings, textbooks are also the dominant instructional material in Delaware. Although districts vary regarding which textbook series they adopt, they all must select from among the small number of series available, including Silver-Burdett, Scott-Foresman, and McGraw-Hill. There

appears to be a trend in Delaware towards the localization of textbook adoption decisions, including whether or not to purchase a textbook at all. Jurisdiction seems to be gradually shifting from district to local school jurisdiction.

There also appear to be important differences based on grade-level. In particular, textbooks appear to play an increasingly less significant role in the primary grades. This conclusion seems to be supported by all of our sources, including the district and school surveys, teacher interviews, and an interview with the State Supervisor of Social Studies. One district, for example, depends entirely upon teacher-made and/or selected social studies materials in grades K-4 while utilizing textbooks only in grades 5 and 6. Other districts show similar tendencies to rely upon teacher-made and teacher-selected materials in the earlier grades--particularly K, 1 and 2. The district questionnaires, which indicated a higher level of utilization of textbooks as an instructional tool in the upper elementary grades, were generally supported by the interviews. Nonetheless, even in the upper grades there appears to be considerable variation in the ways textbooks are utilized.

Although many teachers continue to rely heavily upon the basal series, their utilization is far from universal. While some teachers attempted to "cover" the entire content of the textbook, other teachers used them infrequently or as reference sources. Moreover, several K-3 teachers claimed that no social studies textbooks were available at their particular grade

levels. One second-grade teacher even said, "we have no curriculum. I mean we have no type of books or anything--so it's anything we can pull in on our own." In this teacher's school, as in some other schools, the teachers and local administrators have opted to eliminate the reading/language arts basals and, in their place, to utilize tradebooks, teacher made materials, community resources, and so forth. In such circumstances, it is not surprising to find decreasing dependence on social studies textbooks.

Several practitioners, from both the K-3 and 4-6 levels, indicated that even when textbooks were available, they preferred to use them as a supplement to, rather than the core of, their overall social studies programs. For example, a sixth grade teacher said that she uses the text as a resource. She explained that the students learn how to use the index and extract certain facts from the text, but that they do not go through the text page by page. Even the teacher who made the strongest affirmative statement about utilizing the basal said, "I use the text book and then I try and supplement with different activities and different projects and what have you." Finally, some teachers expressed the sentiment that they preferred not to use a textbook at all. For instance, a second-grade teacher said, "The first year I did use [a textbook]. But since then I've...developed my own units....I tried to make it more activity-oriented."

A major stumbling block to developing alternatives to the textbook was the lack of available funds. Many teachers expressed concern that alternative teaching materials had to be acquired with personal resources. As one frustrated school representative wrote:

> Instead of worrying about [our social studies program], get us atlases, maps, globes, software, books, videotapes and other materials to use and get us some funds travel to museums and historical sites and for talented guest speakers. We can't afford a subscription to a newspaper. We know what to do and how to do it but can't keep hiding the fact we have no resources....

Thus, although trade books were used extensively, particularly in grades K-3, numerous other materials were also utilized in the social studies. In several districts (at various grade levels) teacher-made and/or teacher-selected alternatives supplemented or even replaced textbooks altogether: for example, a fourth-grade teacher used slides from her trip to Japan, along with artifacts such as chopsticks; other teachers utilize dioramas, mobiles, posters, local newspapers, guest speakers from the community, and student-made books; another fourth-grade teacher wrote a grant proposal and won $8,000 in computer equipment for her classroom that she intends to utilize in a National Geographic/National Science Foundation program that involves computer networking with other parts of the country and the world; and finally, a first-grade teacher described spending over $600 in personal

resources to develop a classroom library. However, the use of such alternatives came at a price, and often that price was paid literally by the teachers.

In sum, although many teachers continue to rely heavily upon textbooks, numerous concerns are expressed about their usage. Such materials are often considered too broad (e.g., "Our social studies book covers everything from map and graph skills... through all the ancient civilizations...") and uninteresting to both teachers and students. Partly as a result of these conditions, many teachers have begun to develop their own materials, collect and utilize trade books, and draw on other kinds of resources. Yet, it is clear that many of these same teachers believe they lack adequate funds and the necessary time to fully implement the alternatives they foresee.

Evaluation Practices in the Social Studies

The districts were surveyed about evaluation practices, but not the schools. Figure 6 indicates four of the most commonly used evaluation procedures in grades K-3.

1 Recitation/homework/exercise sheets

2 Teacher-made tests

3 Tests from teacher's guide

4 Standardized Tests

Figure 6. District Personnel's Reports of Most Commonly Used Evaluation Procedures in Grades K-3

Most evaluation in the primary grades is based on recitation/homework/exercise sheets and teacher-made tests. Prepared tests from teacher's guides are also used, but less frequently. The fact that standardized social studies testing in K-3 only began in 1991-1992 may contribute to its low rating in the survey. Although it was not one of the categories on the survey, several respondents mentioned the growing use of student products and student participation as a basis for evaluating learning. This may reflect an increasing emphasis in Delaware and elsewhere on alternative forms of assessment such as portfolios. Figure 7 indicates the evaluation procedures used in grades 4-6.

1 Teacher-made tests

2 Recitation/homework/exercise sheets

3 Standardized tests

4 Tests from teacher's guides

Figure 7. District Personnel's Reports of Most Commonly Employed Evaluation Procedures in Grades 4-6.

A comparison of the K-3 and 4-6 Evaluation Procedures rankings suggests that evaluation practices in the upper elementary grades are quite similar to those used in the primary grades. The major exception is that standardized tests are ranked noticeably higher. While standardized testing is not common in either the primary or upper elementary grades in

Delaware, it occurs more often in the latter than the former. In either case, however, teachers seem strongly opposed to a greater role for standardized testing. As one district representative put it, "Standardized tests in social studies should not be given until junior high school and the thrust of the test should be predicting future events and problem solving." This opposition appears to be especially strong in the primary grades.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout this report we have interwoven our interpretations with the information presented. Since our perspective is therefore at least partially evident, we will now focus on four major conclusions arising from the data. These conclusions are not presented in any order of importance, nor are they discrete. Each, however, will require serious attention from policymakers if reforms in the status quo are desired.

First, policymakers need to address directly the issue of status. Social studies (and science) are clearly regarded by practitioners--and most likely by parents and the public--as "enrichment" or second-rank subjects. Since it is possible that no factor more directly affects the quality of an instructional program than its status, as long as social studies is relegated to a second-class status it is hard to see how necessary resources for the improvement of instructional programs will be secured. As Goodlad (1984) points out, with prudent use of school time, there is sufficient opportunity in the school day to do justice to both "core" and "enrichment" subjects (pp.

280-283). Unless policymakers convey the clear and unambiguous message (e.g., through the provision of temporal and material resources) that social studies matters, we predict little change in the social studies status quo in Delaware elementary schools.

Second, there is clearly a confusing array of beliefs concerning the aims and content of elementary social studies in Delaware. This is not to argue for the imposition of a monolithic state curriculum--that would run against the grain of the most promising movements toward school-based decision-making. But localized decision-making should not mean, in effect, "anything goes." Delaware practitioners do not need dictation from the state, the district, or anywhere else; however, information and in-service education clarifying desirable aims, content, and practices in elementary social studies are essential. Many practitioners already possess pedagogical repertoires that serve their students and communities well. The knowledge and skills of these teachers should be recognized as valuable resources and utilized in local curriculum development efforts and in the training of their peers. However, it is unrealistic to expect even the most competent practitioners to assume sole responsibility for educating their peers. Rather, financial and scholarly support must be provided at all levels if serious social studies reform is to occur.

Third, more attention to multiculturalism seems warranted. In particular, inclusion and perspective-taking need to be built into the basic structure of the curriculum rather than being conceived as add-ons for special occasions such as Black History

month or Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday. Although our understanding of the existing approaches to multiculturalism is admittedly far from complete, it does appear that there is considerable variation in how "multiculturalism" is understood by practitioners. In this regard, we suggest that attention should also be paid to the extent to which goals for socialization may conflict with goals for multiculturalism. Care should be exercised that socialization goals are not implicitly rooted in white middle-class norms that attempt merely to "reach out" to cultural, racial, and socio-economic groups that lie outside the "mainstream."

Finally, current restructuring efforts in Delaware underscore that policymakers will need to examine how social studies should be integrated with other areas of the curriculum such as language arts and science. Nationally there is considerable support for curriculum integration, especially in the elementary grades. It is essential, however, that, given the higher status of "core" subjects such as language arts, curriculum integration proceed with goals in both social studies and language arts in mind. Social studies should not be allowed to become merely a vehicle for the achievement of goals in other subjects.

In conclusion, the needs in social studies in Delaware elementary schools are more similar than different from needs in other states. Delaware can have the kind of exemplary social studies programs called for by groups such as the National Council for the Social Studies. But this is only likely to occur

with the cultivation of a broader conception of the social studies, with more effective integration of the social studies into the overall curriculum, and with the devotion of more time and resources than has been the norm in recent years. Leadership to these ends would be a most valuable contribution.

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APPENDIX A

DISTRICT QUESTIONNAIRE

SURVEY OF SOCIAL STUDIES IN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN DELAWARE

DIRECTIONS For each of the following questions, place a check [ ] or write your response in the space provided.

NAME OF SCHOOL DISTRICT : _____

I. DISTRICT VITAL STATISTICS

1. Enrollment during 1990-91 school year: _____ Students

2. Number of schools: _____ Elementary 1-6

3. Metropolitan status:
   _____ Rural
   _____ Suburban
   _____ Urban
   _____ Mixed

4. Student characteristics:
   _____% Below poverty line
   _____% Hispanic
   _____% Black

5. Grade level at which social studies is no longer taught by a teacher in a self-contained classroom; that is, students are sent to a teacher for social studies who is not their homeroom teacher and/or the school is departmentalized for all subjects: _____

II. K-6 SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

PLEASE INCLUDE A COPY OF YOUR DISTRICT'S K-6 SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM GUIDE WITH THIS COMPLETED SURVEY.

Grade	Topic	Recommend Time Allocation per Week in Minutes	Textbook and/or Other Classroom Instructional Materials in Use
K			
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			

2. According to your observations of <u>instructional practices in 1-3 social studies</u> in your district, rank order the following instructional strategies (1= MOST COMMON, 2 = NEXT MOST COMMON, AND SO FORTH; N/A = NEVER WITNESSED STRATEGY):

_____ Community-/experience-based instruction
_____ Contract learning
_____ Discussion/recitation
_____ Individual assignments/seatwork
_____ Inquiry/discovery learning
_____ Lecture
_____ Modules/programmed instruction
_____ Simulations
_____ Unit/course projects
_____ Values education
_____ Other (SPECIFY: _____)

3. According to your observations of <u>instructional practices in 4-6 social studies</u> in your district, rank order the following instructional strategies (1= MOST COMMON, 2 = NEXT MOST COMMON, AND SO FORTH; N/A = NEVER WITNESSED STRATEGY):

_____ Community-/experience-based instruction
_____ Contract learning
_____ Discussion/recitation
_____ Individual/discovery learning
_____ Lecture
_____ Modules/programmed instruction
_____ Simulations
_____ Unit/course projects
_____ Values education
_____ Other (SPECIFY: _____)

4. According to your observations of <u>evaluation practices in K-3 social studies</u> in your district, rank order the following instructional strategies (1= MOST COMMON, 2 = NEXT MOST COMMON, AND SO FORTH; N/A = NEVER WITNESSED STRATEGY):

_____ Recitation/homework/exercise sheets
_____ Standardized tests
_____ Teacher-made tests
_____ Tests from teacher's guide
_____ Other (SPECIFY: _____)

5. According to your observations of <u>evaluation practices in 4-6 social studies</u> in your district, rank order the following instructional strategies (1= MOST COMMON, 2 = NEXT MOST COMMON, AND SO FORTH; N/A = NEVER WITNESSED STRATEGY):

_____ Recitation/homework/exercise sheets
_____ Standardized tests
_____ Teacher-made tests
_____ Tests from teacher's guide
_____ Other (SPECIFY: _____)

6. Respond to the following assertion (CONFIRM, REFUTE, OR RESTATE; EXPLAIN):

"Although the district curriculum guide plans for 1-6 articulation in the social studies curriculum and for articulation with secondary social studies courses, most teachers ignore the guide. In practice, the knowledge, skills, and values that students learn in social studies in one grade are rarely connected to what they learn in the next grade."

III. STATUS

1. Rank order how you think teachers of grades 1-3 in your district rate the importance of each of the following subjects (1 = MOST IMPORTANT AND 9 - LEAST IMPORTANT; N/A = NOT APPLICABLE):

_____ Art
_____ Foreign languages
_____ Language arts
_____ Mathematics
_____ Music
_____ Physical education
_____ Reading
_____ Science
_____ Social studies

2. Rank order how you think teachers of grades 4-6 in your district rate the importance of each of the following subjects (1 = MOST IMPORTANT AND 9 - LEAST IMPORTANT; N/A = NOT APPLICABLE):

_____ Art
_____ Foreign languages
_____ Language arts
_____ Mathematics
_____ Music
_____ Physical education
_____ Reading
_____ Science
_____ Social studies

IV. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

1. In the past four or five years there have been a number of social studies initiatives nationally (e.g., the Bradley Commission on History in the Schools, various reform groups in geographic and international/global/ multicultural education). What effects, if any, have these had on K-6 social studies in your district? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

_____ More attention given to inservice and/or summer institutes in social studies curriculum revision
_____ More instructional time for social studies
_____ More money spent on purchase of social studies instructional materials
_____ Other (SPECIFY:_____)

2. List any other important developments affecting K-6 social studies in your district within the last four or five years:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

V. PRIORITIES

1. Rank order the need in your district for the following (1 = HIGHEST PRIORITY AND 5 = LOWEST PRIORITY; N/A = NOT APPLICABLE):

_____ Assistance/consultation with district-wide curriculum revision
_____ Concise guidance on main social studies reform initiatives
_____ Guidelines for incorporating multicultural concerns in the curriculum
_____ Identification of model social studies programs
_____ More inservice in social studies
_____ Desirability and likely effects of statewide standardized testing in social studies

_____ Other: (SPECIFY: _____)

2. Add any further considerations that you feel are important in dealing with K-6 social studies:

_____

_____

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_____

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_____

_____

NOTE: DID YOU REMEMBER TO INCLUDE A COPY OF YOUR DISTRICT'S K-6 SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM GUIDE WITH THIS COMPLETED SURVEY?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!

SCHOOL QUESTIONNAIRE
SURVEY OF SOCIAL STUDIES IN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN DELAWARE

DIRECTIONS: FOR EACH OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, WRITE YOUR RESPONSE IN THE SPACE PROVIDED.

1. (FOR OFFICE USE ONLY)

   a. Name of your school district: _____

   b. Name of your school: _____

2. a. Grade levels in your school: _____

   b. Grade levels in your school which social studies is taught: _____

3. Student characteristics:
   _____% Below poverty line
   _____% Hispanic
   _____% Black

4. To what extent do teachers in your school follow the district K-6 social studies curriculum? (CIRCLE THE NUMBER WHICH REPRESENTS YOUR RESPONSE.)

Not at all		**Somewhat**		**Completely**
1	2	3	4	5

5. According to your observations of instructional practices in K-3 social studies in your school, rank order the following instructional strategies (1 = MOST COMMON, 2 = NEXT MOST COMMON, AND SO FORTH; N/A = NEVER WITNESSED STRATEGY):

   _____ Community-/experience-based instruction
   _____ Contract learning
   _____ Discussion/recitation
   _____ Individual assignments/seatwork
   _____ Inquiry/discovery learning
   _____ Lecture
   _____ Modules/programmed instruction
   _____ Simulations
   _____ Unit/course projects
   _____ Values education
   _____ Other (SPECIFY: _____)

6. According to your observations of instructional practices in 4-6 social studies in your school, rank order the following instructional strategies (1 = MOST COMMON, 2 = NEXT MOST COMMON, AND SO FORTH; N/A = NEVER WITNESSED STRATEGY):

_____ Community-/experience-based instruction
_____ Contract learning
_____ Discussion/recitation
_____ Individual assignments/seatwork
_____ Inquiry/discovery learning
_____ Lecture
_____ Modules/programmed instruction
_____ Simulations
_____ Unit/course projects
_____ Values education
_____ Other (SPECIFY: _____)

7. Rank order how you think teachers of grades K-3 in your school rate the importance of each of the following subjects (1 = MOST IMPORTANT AND 9 = LEAST IMPORTANT; N/A = NOT APPLICABLE):

_____ Art
_____ Foreign languages
_____ Language arts
_____ Mathematics
_____ Music
_____ Physical education
_____ Reading
_____ Science
_____ Social studies

8. Rank order how you think teachers of grades 4-6 in your school rate the importance of each of the following subjects (1 = MOST IMPORTANT AND 9 = LEAST IMPORTANT; N/A = NOT APPLICABLE):

_____ Art
_____ Foreign languages
_____ Language arts
_____ Mathematics
_____ Music
_____ Physical education
_____ Reading
_____ Science
_____ Social studies

9. Rank order the need in your school for the following (1 = HIGHEST PRIORITY AND 5 = LOWEST PRIORITY; N/A = NOT APPLICABLE):

_____ Assistance/consultation with district-wide curriculum revision
_____ Concise guidance on main social studies reform initiatives
_____ Guidelines for incorporating multicultural concerns in the curriculum
_____ Identification of model social studies programs
_____ More inservice in social studies
_____ Desirability and likely effects of statewide standardized testing in social studies
_____ Other (SPECIFY: _____)

10. Add any further considerations that you feel are important in dealing with K-6 social studies.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!
PLEASE RETURN YOUR COMPLETED SURVEY
USING THE SELF-ADDRESSED ENVELOPE PROVIDED
BY MONDAY, JULY 15.